

Message Text

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72

ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: SOPN, EI

SUBJECT: OPINION POLL SHOWS POPULARITY OF EC AND GARRET FITZGERALD

SUMMARY: ONE OF IRELAND'S REARE OPINION POLLS SHOWED THAT DECISIVE
MAJORITY OF PUBLIC WOULD FAVOR REMAINING IN EC EVEN IF BRITAIN
PULLS OUT. SINCE GOVT HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT ALSO FAVORS THIS
COURSE, IRELAND NOW APPEARS CERTAIN TO ATTEMPT TO REMAIN IN EC
REGARDLESS OF BRITISH DECISION. SAME POLL SHOWED THAT FONMIN GARRET
FITZGERALD WAS MUCH THE MOST POPULAR OF ALL GOI MINISTERS. THERE
WERE UNPLEASANT SURPRISES FOR MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES. END SUMMARY
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1. POLL WAS CARRIED OUT BY "IRISH MARKETING SURVEYS" FOR "IRISH BUSINESS" MAGAZINE. IT USED A SAMPLE OF 1600 ADULTS, WITH REPRESENTATIVE QUOTAS FOR REGIONS, CLASSES, AGES, AND SEXES. WELL-PREPARED POLLS ARE RARE IN IRELAND, SO THIS ONE HAS ATTRACTED MUCH INTEREST.

2. FIFTY-NINE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THEY WOULD FAVOR REMAINING IN EC EVEN IF BRITAIN SHOULD WITHDRAW. THIS IS VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL WITH FIFTY-EIGHT PERCENT VOTE FOR EC DURING 1972 REFERENDUM ON ENTRY. ON OTHER HAND, PREVIOUS UNDECIDEDS HAVE APPARENTLY SWITCHED TO OPPOSITION. TWENTY-NINE PERCENT FAVORED LEAVING "EUROPE" IF BRITAIN DID SO, WHILE ONLY TWELVE PERCENT OPPOSED ENTRY IN 1972. INTERESTINGLY, ONLY FORTY-FIVE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT IRISH EC MEMBERSHIP HAD BEEN A "VERY GOOD" OR "FAIRLY GOOD" THING. THIS CONTRASTS WITH FIFTY-NINE PERCENT WHO ARE IN FAVOR OF STAYING IN IF BRITISH WITHDRAW. THE CONTRAST SUGGESTS THAT IRISH PUBLIC HAS DEVELOPED A LOYALTY TO EC WHICH GOES BEYOND ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST. IF ONE CONSIDERS FACT THAT IRISH ECONOMY HAS BEEN DISMAL EVER SINCE EC ENTRY, THE HEAVY ENDORSEMENT OF EC MEMBERSHIP IS STRIKING. SINCE BOTH GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC NOW SEEM CLEARLY TO FAVOR REMAINING IN EC, IT SEEMS SAFE TO EXPECT THAT IRELAND WILL ATTEMPT TO REMAIN "EUROPEAN" WHATEVER THE BRITISH DO.

3. THE SAME SURVEY ASKED RESPONDENTS WHICH GOI MINISTER THEY CONSIDERED MOST EFFECTIVE. PM COSGRAVE WAS, HOWEVER, CONSPICUOUSLY OMITTED FROM POLL, AND NO EXPLANATION WAS GIVEN. WE CAN ONLY SUSPECT THAT THE MAGAZINE DID NOT WANT RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISCLOSING THAT THE PM MAY BE OVERSHADOWED BY ONE OR MORE OF HIS MINISTERS. RANKING OF OTHERS HAS SOME INTERESTING SURPRISES. FIONA FITZGERALD'S FIRST PLACE IS NOT IN ITSELF SURPRISING, BUT HIS MASSIVE LEAD IS. HE GOT TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF ALL RESPONSES, WHICH WAS ALMOST DOUBLE THE PERFORMANCE OF DEPUTY PM BRENDAN CORISH, WITH FOURTEEN PERCENT. FURTHER, FITZGERALD WAS AHEAD OF EVERY OTHER MINISTER IN EVERY SEX, CLASS, AND REGIONAL BREAKDOWN, EXCEPT FOR SMALL LEAD FOR CORISH IN UNSKILLED LABOR. FITZGERALD'S SUPPORT IS ALL THE MORE IMPRESSIVE BECAUSE, UNLIKE OTHER POPULAR MINISTERS, HE HAS NO SINGLE STRONG CONSTITUENCY.

4. CORISH'S SECOND PLACE LOOKS IMPRESSIVE BY COMPARISON TO ALL OTHER COMPETITORS. IN THIRD PLACE IS CLINTON OF AGRICULTURE WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EIGHT PERCENT. THIS IS A GOOD SHOWING FOR A MINISTER WHO HAD NO GREAT POPULARITY WHEN HE TOOK OFFICE. CLINTON IS, HOWEVER, A SPECIAL CASE, SINCE HE MADE A STRONG SHOWING ONLY WITH FARMERS, AND THEN ONLY WITH MALES. IN FOURTH PLACE WITH SEVEN PERCENT IS MICHAEL O'LEARY OF LABOR, WHO HAD CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH IN ALL GROUPS EXCEPT FARMERS. UNLIKE CLINTON, THE ATTRACTIVE YOUNG O'LEARY RAN STRONGER WITH WOMEN THAN WITH MEN. OTHER FAIRLY HIGH-RANKING MINISTERS WERE RITCHIE RYAN IN FINANCE WITH SIX PERCENT, LARGELY COMING

FROM LOWER-MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES. (THE RICHER ONES CLEARLY DO NOT LIKE HAS NEW WEALTH TAX.) TOM O'DONNELL OF GAELTACHT HAD SIX PERCENT, WHICH IS A VERY GOOD PERFORMANCE FOR AN INCONSPICUOUS POST.

5. MINISTERS RANKING IN THE MIDDLE WERE JAMES TULLY (LOCAL GOVERNMENT) WITH FIVE PERCENT, JUSTIN KEATING (INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE) WITH FIVE PERCENT, AND CONOR CRUISE-O'BRIEN (POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS) WITH FOUR PERCENT. THESE RESULTS WILL BE DISAPPOINTING FOR KEATING AND CRUISE-O'BRIEN, WHO HAVE HIGH GOALS AND VAST EXPOSURE.

6. THE ALSO-RANS WERE: PATRICK DONEGAN (DEFENSE) WITH THREE PERCENT; DICK BURKE. (EDUCATION) WITH THREE PERCENT; PATRICK COONEY (JUSTICE) THREE PERCENT; TOM FITZPATRICK (LANDS) TWO PERCENT; AND PETER BARRY (TRANSPORT AND POWER) ALMOST OFF THE END OF THE SCALE WITH ON PERCENT.

7. THIS RANKING OF MINISTERS HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP OF FINE GAEL AND LABOR PARTIES. FITZGERALD WOULD CLEARLY BE IN A STRONG POSITION TO LEAD FINE GAEL, BUT HE IS EFFECTIVELY BLOCKED BY COSGRAVE, WHO HAS THE PARTY FIRMLY UNDER CONTROL (DESPITE A PUBLIC STANDING WHICH IS PROBABLY LOWER). COSGRAVE SHOWS NO SIGNS OF RETIRING, SO FITZGERALD MAY WELL NEVER GET A SHOT AT THE LEADERSHIP. LABOR PARTY LEADER CORISH DOES LOOK LIKE RETIRING, HOWEVER, AND JUSTIN KEATING HAS BEEN HIS MOST LOGICAL SUCCESSOR. MICHAEL O'LEARY'S STRONGER PERFORMANCE IN THIS POLL IS PROBABLY NOT DECISIVE ENOUGH TO MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE, BUT IT NEVERTHELESS PUTS HIM BACK IN THE RUNNING FOR A PROMOTION THAT HAD SEEMED CLEARLY OUT OF REACH.

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